Independent Final Evaluation of the Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Southern Africa (RECLISA) Project: Namibia Country Report

American Institutes for Research
Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0046

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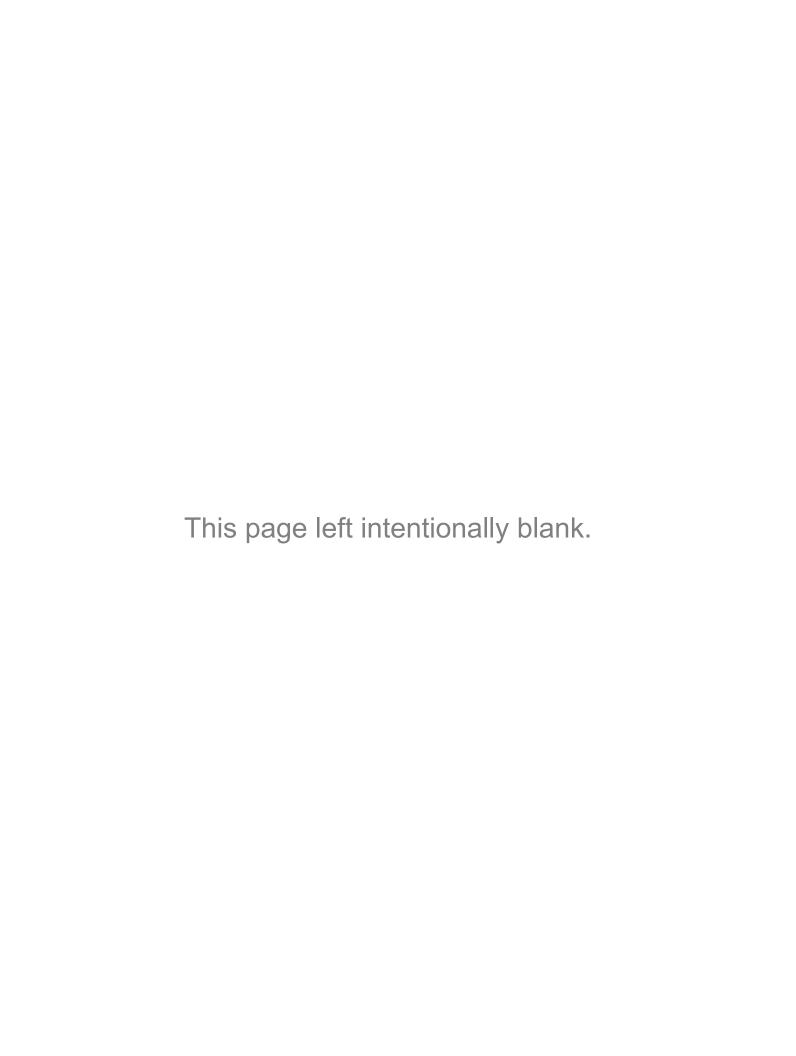
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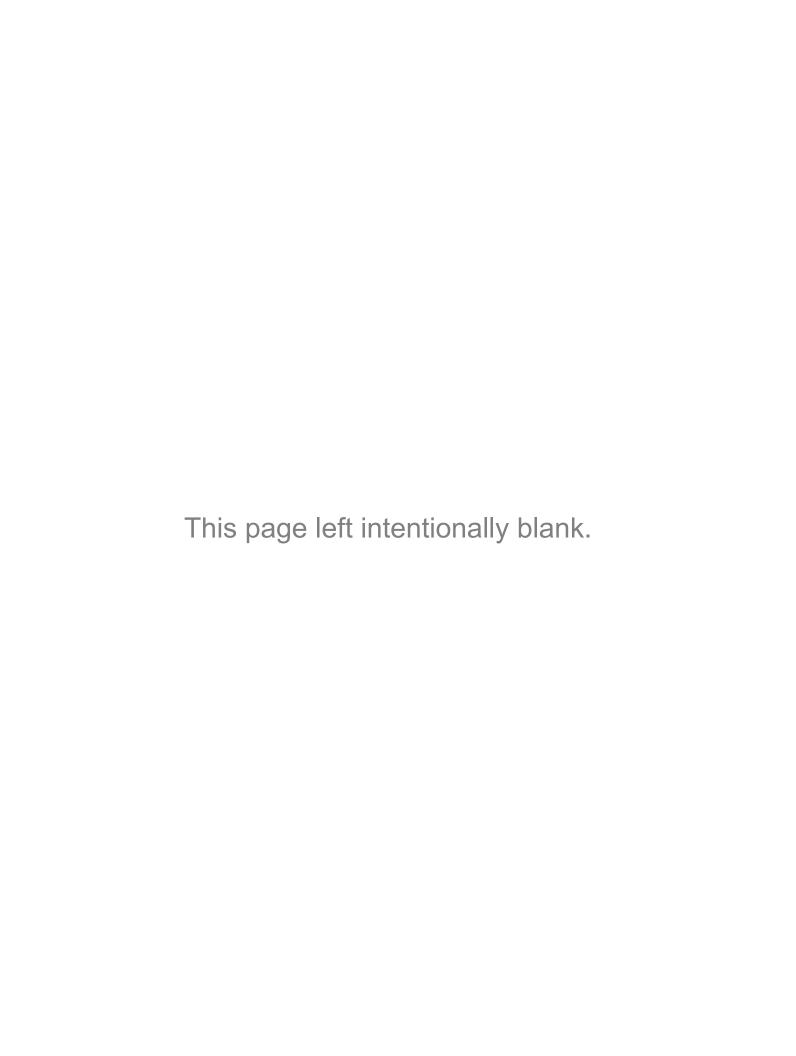Cooperative Agreement Number: E-9-K-4-0046

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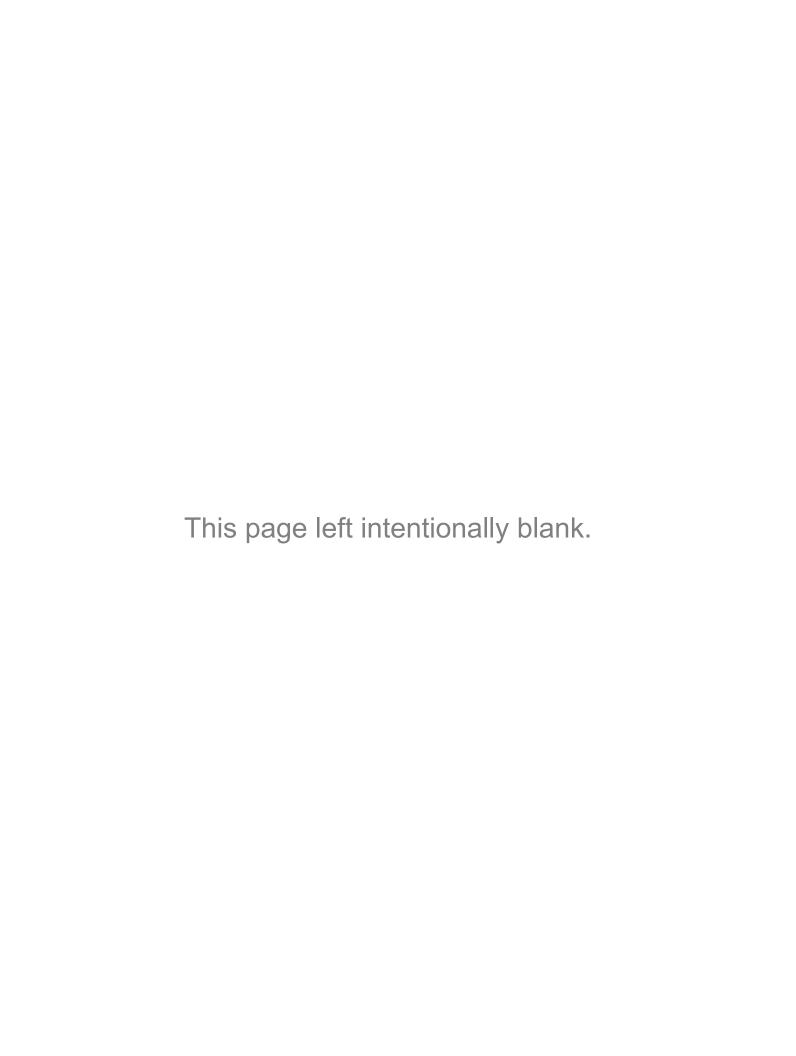
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND TERMS

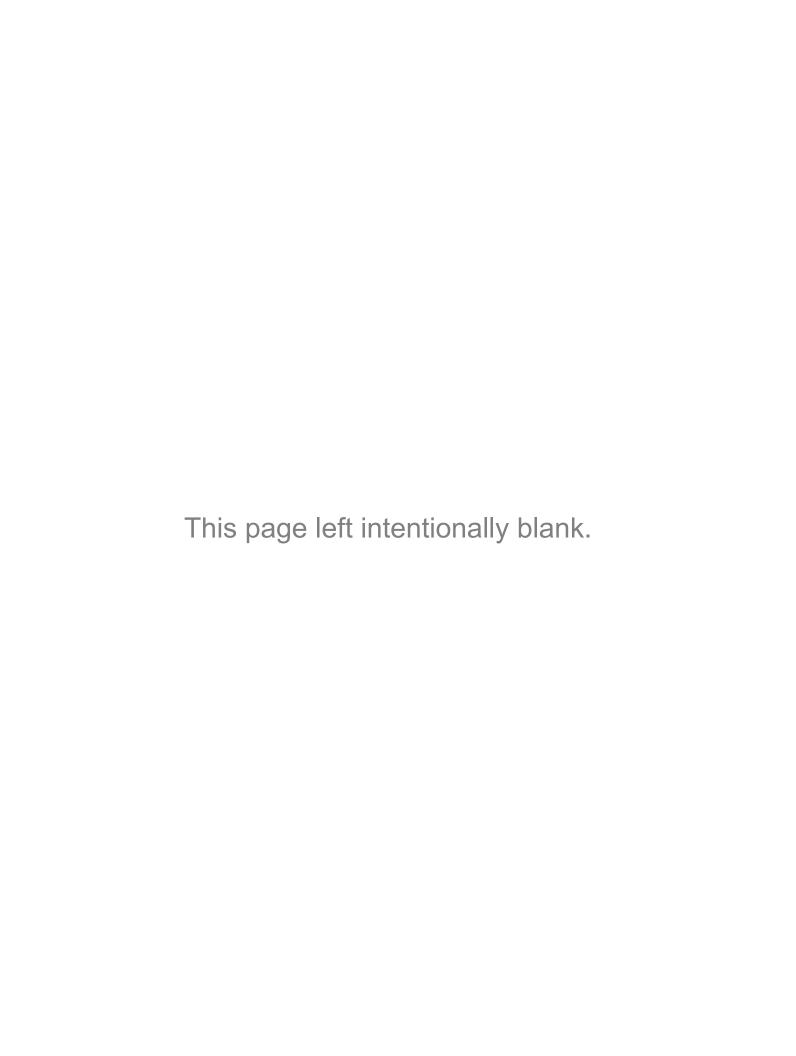|	
AIR	American Institutes for Research
COPE Clubs	Care, Protection, and Empowerment Clubs[1]
EDF	Education Development Fund
EI	Child Labor Education Initiative
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GNI	Gross National Income
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MGECW	Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare
NAD	Namibian Dollar
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OCFT	Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PACC	Program Advisory Committee on Child Labor
PQA	Programme Quality Assurance
RECLISA	Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Southern Africa
REP	Resource Exchange Program
SDF	School Development Fund
STS	Student Tracking System
TECL	Towards the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USDOL	United States Department of Labor
WFCL	Worst Forms of Child Labor

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[1] The acronym also refers to Africare's Community-based Orphan Care, Protection, and Empowerment (COPE) Project, implemented in Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With approximately 2 million inhabitants, Namibia is one of the least populated countries in the world. Its economy is closely linked to South Africa and the gross national income per capita classifies Namibia as a middle-income country. However, as demonstrated by the country's Gini coefficient at 0.7 (one of the highest in the world), the wealth is shared by a small elite. Namibia has an important poverty problem: over one-third of the population (34.9%) live on US$1 per day, and more than half (55.8%) live on US$2 per day (UNDP 2005 data). This poverty has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. With a prevalence rate among pregnant women of 19.7% (2007 data), Namibia is among the most HIV/AIDS-affected countries in the world. The HIV/AIDS rates vary according to the region, with the highest incidence rate found in Caprivi's Katima Mulilo (39.4%).

The Ministry of Education in Namibia has not been able to respond appropriately to the country's poverty, nor to its HIV/AIDS challenge. The education system remains a highly theoretical system, elitist and exams-focused, inappropriate to the majority of Namibian children, and least of all appropriate for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). The importance of the examination system and the subjects examined are such that only theoretical subjects (mathematics, languages) are being prioritized in school, without sufficiently allowing students to study life skills and/or practical subjects that would be useful for OVC. With the increase of HIV/AIDS (and a proportionally large number of parents or caregivers being ill), it is believed that the number of children engaged in child labor, including various forms of prostitution, has increased substantially.

Reducing Exploitive Child Labor in Southern Africa (RECLISA) Namibia is a well-designed project based on a model tested by Africare elsewhere in Africa. Among its strong features are the Care, Protection, and Empowerment Clubs (COPE Clubs) and its Life Skills Curriculum (developed for use in the COPE Clubs); in conjunction with psychosocial support tools such as the *Heroes Books,*[2] they provide support for children in danger of child labor, especially OVC. The project, at its end, has achieved its main targets.

The project supported the Child Labor Education Initiative goals (awareness, education, policy, research, and sustainability) through its provision of direct educational services to child beneficiaries, such as offsetting the payment of school fees. Their support has also improved quality of schooling by providing much-needed equipment to schools through the Resource Exchange Program (REP). At present, REP supports schools in lieu of a government program that has not yet been implemented, and which aims to give school-fee exemption for OVC in the future.

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[2] *Heroes Books* were initially developed by a United Nations Children's Fund/Philippi trust initiative that requires orphans and vulnerable children to develop stories depicting themselves as heroes. (For a more in-depth explanation of the *Heroes Books,* see Section II: Project Description).

COPE Clubs address education barriers related to OVC stigma and feelings of isolation. Africare has trained COPE Patrons on the use of the *Heroes Books* at its 60 project sites (currently, 40 sites have developed *Heroes Books*). This initiative is an example of a best practice that could be duplicated elsewhere.

Nevertheless, the project has also faced challenges. A recurring problem with defining child labor has at times led to confusion about the project's objectives. Project-created Child Welfare Subcommittees were not based on any existing community, committee, or institution and were, therefore, not very efficient. Thus, a revised plan of action substituted Child Welfare Committees with Constituency OVC Forum Committees. Also, the budget for the school gardens was insufficient to ensure adequate services in all communities. Some areas of project implementation were inadequate for the setup of gardens (e.g., the area lacked water).

COPE Patrons must conduct COPE meetings outside of their work hours, without any incentives to do so. It follows that many of them complain of "burnout." Finally, the beneficiary children in the COPE Clubs are between 7 and 18 years of age. With such a wide variance in age, making the COPE curriculum adequate and interesting for all children proved to be a challenge.

Evaluation findings include the following recommendations, specific to USDOL:

- That USDOL require grant awardees to use participatory approaches in the conception phase to ensure that project proposals address local needs and build community and government ownership.

- That USDOL investigate, in all committee-creating projects, whether an existing and functioning community committee can be used (e.g., PTA or school board) instead of establishing a new committee.

- That USDOL, to benefit from the gains from RECLISA, promote a strong coordination between the second phase of Towards the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Africare.

The following is recommended to Africare:

- That simultaneous support from two projects be made available when such support is cost-effective and can improve the results of the project initiatives (in other words, that such simultaneous support should not be considered "unfair").

- That the sustainability and exit strategies of the project be further defined to ensure that project activities will continue beyond the scope of the project.

- That Africare seek to integrate the former beneficiaries into USAID's support program for OVC (through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS), or into other similar initiatives.[3]

Based on interview recommendations, the following general advice has been given for future policy-level interventions:

- That policy-related activities be accompanied with an implementation plan (and a supporting implementation budget).

- That policymaking activities be set up using participatory approaches.

- That policymaking activities be accompanied by measures of structural change, to avoid a top-down creation of the policy and the corresponding lack of ownership and lack of implementation at the grassroots level.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the project has reached its main quantitative and qualitative targets and that it has many strong assets, such as the COPE and COPE/Caregiver Clubs, the development of a Life Skills Manual, and the *Heroes Books*; all of which can be used as examples of best practices, and which should be considered for use in other USDOL-funded projects.

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[3] It should be noted that subsequent to the Final Evaluation, AIR/RECLISA provided funds to Africare for a second round of the program, in the recommended amount of 1,000 Namibian dollars per school for each of the 60 schools. In return, the schools have agreed to maintain all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation. This should have a positive—and significant—impact on the sustainability of the project.

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I   CONTEXT

1.1   INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) funds international labor projects through its Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB). The Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking (OCFT) is the office within ILAB that administers grants and contracts to organizations engaged in efforts to eliminate child labor and raise awareness about child labor issues. Since 1995, Congress has appropriated over US$595 million to USDOL, which has been used to combat child labor in more than 75 countries around the world.

USDOL-funded projects seek to achieve five major goals:

1. Withdrawing or preventing children from involvement in exploitive child labor through the provision of direct educational services.

2. Strengthening policies on child labor and education, the capacity of national institutions to combat child labor, and formal and transitional education systems that encourage children engaged in or at risk of engaging in exploitive labor to attend school.

3. Raising awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilizing a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures.

4. Supporting research and the collection of reliable data on child labor.

5. Ensuring the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

For such ends, USDOL supports two specific programs (in addition to some smaller initiatives):

- **The International Labour Organization's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC).** Since 1995, ILO-IPEC has received US$330 million from the U.S. Government, the leading donor to the program. Most ILO-IPEC projects include "direct action" components that are interventions to remove or prevent children from involvement in exploitive and hazardous work; one major strategy is to increase children's access to and participation in formal and nonformal education. Most projects also have a capacity-building component to assist in building a sustainable base for long-term elimination of exploitive child labor.

- **The Child Labor Education Initiative (EI).** EI projects are designed to ensure that children in areas with a high incidence of child labor are withdrawn and integrated into educational settings, and that they persist in their education once enrolled. Concurrently, the program seeks to avert at-risk children from leaving school and entering child labor. The EI is based on the notion that the elimination of exploitive child labor depends, to a large extent, on improving access to, quality of, and relevance of education. Funds under the EI are competitively bid, and support cooperative agreements with international, nonprofit, for-profit, and faith-based entities.

In addition to these two initiatives, in 2007 the USDOL allocated $60 million for other child labor elimination projects and provided $2.5 million for additional awareness-raising and research activities.

1.2   NATIONAL CONTEXT

With a population approximating 2 million, Namibia is one of the least-populated countries in the world. Namibia's economy is closely linked to that of South Africa and consists primarily of mining and manufacturing. The gross national income (GNI) per capita of US$2,990 classifies Namibia as a middle-income country (World Bank, 2006). However, the wealth of the country is shared by a very small elite, as demonstrated by one of the highest GNI coefficients in the world: 0.70 (CIA, 2003). These disparities are reflected in Namibia's high unemployment, estimated at 30% of the labor force (World Bank, 2006), and its high poverty rate: The most recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report indicates that 34.9% of the population live on US$1 per day and 55.8% live on US$2 per day (UNDP 2005 data). The government passed a 2004 Labor Act to protect people from job discrimination stemming from pregnancy and their HIV/AIDS status.

1.2.1   HIV/AIDS: The Enemy Within

In the National Plan on HIV/AIDS (2007), while recognizing the recent economic successes of the country, the President of Namibia identified one enemy that "threatens to undo all the gains since independence on March 21, 1990." He continued: "That enemy is HIV/AIDS." While it is recognized that HIV/AIDS has reached "epidemic proportions," there exists no general nationwide survey of incidence among the Namibian population. Data from sentinel studies of prevalence among pregnant women are extrapolated to analyze national tendencies. According to the latest sentinel report, the prevalence among pregnant women is 19.7% (2007), which situates Namibia among the countries with the highest HIV/AIDS incidence rates in the world. The President of Namibia notes in particular that "HIV/AIDS threatens the education and psychosocial development of our children as it robs them of their parents, caregivers, teachers, and ultimately their future."

A recent United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) study (November 2006)[4] concluded that "as age increases, intent for safe sex declines." Moreover, it was found that "one in four respondents (25%) of the 10 to 14 year olds and 15% of the 15 to 24 year olds experienced one or more forms of sexual abuse."

The HIV/AIDS rates vary according to the region, with the highest incidence rate found in Caprivi's Katima Mulilo (39.4%). HIV/AIDS has affected the very fabric of society in this and certain other regions, a large proportion of children live with older caregivers or with parents who are ill. As early as 1999, media depicted destitute mothers sending their children to work as prostitutes from the age of nine. With the increase of HIV/AIDS-affected people (and a proportionally large number of parents or caregivers being ill), it is believed that the number of

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[4] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2006. *HIV and AIDS knowledge, attitudes, practices and behavior (KAPB) study in Namibia.* Windhoek: UNICEF.

children engaged in prostitution has increased substantially. Also, a "mild form" of child commercial sexual exploitation has become common, and might affect a much larger portion of the child population than "conventional" prostitution does: Many children have sexual relationships with older men, often referred to as "sugar daddies" or "sponsors." The children may not necessarily be given money for their services, but they may receive cell phones, groceries for the family, clothes, or payment of school fees and school uniforms.[5] Regardless, there are few studies and little information about these problems.

Caregivers and single parents can receive government aid in the form of Namibian dollars (NAD); cash aid of NAD 200 for the first child they adopt and NAD 100 per subsequent child.[6] However, the procedures for receiving the grant are complex and frequently take up to eight months (from the day the procedures are initiated to the first payment). Also, it should be noted that some caregivers do not use the funding to support the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in their care. In any case, the amount is not sufficient to cover proper maintenance of a child (food and clothing) for one month. One interviewee noted; "Caregivers have adopted six or more children and cannot cope with the number of children they have." Another interviewee from the Ministry of Health noted that parents with AIDS "continued to have children," and thereby increased the risk of leaving orphans behind at an early age.

1.2.2   Education

The Ministry of Education (MOE) in Namibia has not been able to respond appropriately to the HIV/AIDS challenge. The education system remains highly theoretical, elitist and exams-focused, inappropriate to the majority of Namibian children, and least of all appropriate for OVC. During the years after independence, the new government's plans to make the schooling more child-centered and less elitist have largely failed (according to interviews with high-level education officials). The attempts to reform the education system encountered too much resistance from teachers and community members who preferred the old system.

However, MOE has succeeded in introducing some responses to the HIV/AIDS and OVC situation. In particular, MOE has created an Education Sector Policy for OVC (draft version, April 2008), which is part of the National Plan of Action for OVC (2006–2010). The National Plan is coordinated by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare (MGECW).

The draft Education Sector Policy for OVC is based on the Education Act, 2001 (Act 16 of 2001), which enforces mandatory school attendance for all children age 7 to 16 (Section 53), in line with the Constitution. The law prevents a child older than 10 years from being admitted to grade 1, but it requires that if the child is under 16, such child must be admitted to "an alternative learning program." However, there is little effort by the government to implement these policies. According to one interviewee—

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[5] For further information, see Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education. 2001. *National situational analysis on HIV/AIDS among children in difficult circumstances in Namibia.*
[6] Approximately US$24.63 per month for the first child and US$12.32 for any subsequent children. The NAD is attached to the South African Rand. US$1 = NAD 8.12, as per exchange rates of June 17, 2008.

> *There is no deliberate effort of the government to implement what is in the Constitution—that is, free schooling. They leave everything to the principals, some of whom expel OVC [who cannot pay the school fees and uniform].*

Also, the Education Sector Policy is not fully coordinated with MGECW. Most importantly, it uses different definitions of OVC, which is complicating the identification of beneficiaries at local levels and creating some organizational problems. As part of the policy, OVC are supposed to be exempt from paying school fees through an Education Development Fund (EDF).

The EDF is made necessary for the following reason: Despite enforcing mandatory universal education, the Education Act also authorizes the schools to establish a School Development Fund (SDF) to be paid by parents. Parents and caregivers under specific circumstances related to their socioeconomic situation may be fully or partially exempted from payment of the contribution to the SDF; likewise, OVC fall under the categories of children that can be exempted from payment. To compensate for the income lost through exemptions, the school board may apply to a national EDF for assistance. The national EDF consists of moneys appropriated by the Parliament and donations. The main aim of the fund is therefore to benefit "socioeconomically disadvantaged learners."

Despite being piloted in a few regions and in a limited number of schools, the evaluator does not foresee the EDF to be fully operational anytime soon.[7] One problem of the EDF has been determining whether OVC receiving the aforementioned MGECW grant of NAD 200/100 are eligible for exemption of school fees (see Section 1.2.1).[8] It should be noted that the school fees at the primary level are approximately NAD 250 per year and the high school fees are usually between NAD 600 and NAD 1,200 per year. It would be very difficult for caregivers to pay the education fees from only the MGECW grant, especially since the latter is already insufficient to cover the children's basic needs.

Certain agencies, such as UNICEF, are organizing awareness-raising campaigns to inform caregivers about the exemption policy. However, the success of this approach seems to be limited, since the EDF policy is not backed up with actual funding except in a few pilot communities.

The MOE is seeking to improve the curriculum to make it more appropriate to the children's lives in Namibia. Hence, the ministry has introduced life skills classes as a mandatory part of the children's education. Although the life skills curriculum is a step in the right direction, its implementation has encountered problems: Life skills courses are not part of the mandatory exam subjects, and many principals therefore tend to neglect these classes or relegate them to the least attractive timeslots of the timetable. The principals (and the schools) are evaluated by MOE according to the students' results at the exams. The promotion or demotion of school staff

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[7] During the midterm, senior MOE officials promised that it would be implemented "very soon." However, two years later, at the time of the final evaluation, the EDF is still not operative.
[8] A rational policy would be to mainstream the OVC support and automatically exempt all children receiving the MGECW grant from paying school fees. However, policies in Namibia are not characterized by coordinated decision-making. Hence, MOE is setting up its own very complicated system to identify eligible OVC for the EDF.

depends on the students' performance in mathematics, English, and other exam subjects. According to a U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) specialist on OVC—

> *The schools are teaching the children to pass exams. There is a pressure on principals and teachers that the children get good results at the exams rather than integrated skills... The children are learning facts that have no relevance to their own life, due to the requirements of the education managers.*

MOE's exam policies are inhibiting the successful implementation of the ministry's own life skills curriculum. Other agencies have had similar problems. Life skills programs developed by UNICEF *(My Future, My Choice, and Windows of Hope)* have been relegated to the least attractive slots of the timetable, and only implemented in UNICEF-supported schools. Since the skills taught by these interventions are not considered as exam-required matters, the classes are generally discontinued after the end of the donors' funding. Also, the teachers responsible for conducting the classes in most if not all cases do it during their free time and thus have little incentive to continue implementation "for free" indefinitely.

During the fieldwork in Caprivi, a UNICEF regional adviser on OVC believed the incidence of child rape and violence in school, as well as the "sugar daddy sponsoring" system, to be "very widespread," affecting a much larger percentage of the child population than generally supposed. Another interviewee (from MGECW) noted that there had been several cases of children being raped by teachers in the Caprivi region.[9] In most cases, however, such rapes are not reported since "the families are so destitute that they would accept anything." Another interviewee from a local nongovernmental organization (NGO) reported the following:

> *The socioeconomic situation is so bad that adults can use the children sexually as long as they make a financial contribution [to the caregivers]. Lately, we had the case of a 12-year-old girl who was pregnant... The initial age [for sexual relations] is going down to about 10 years. At 15, children are already quite experienced.*

The combined and mutually reinforcing impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty, together with a lack of appropriate educational response, has led to a situation in which schools are not necessarily "safe zones." According to interviewees, it is a situation of child abuse in front of which many teachers "feel helpless."

1.2.3   Child Labor

With the increase of HIV/AIDS prevalence (and a proportionally large number of parents or caregivers being ill), it is believed that the number of children engaged in child labor (including various forms of prostitution) has substantially increased over the last few years. Namibia is finalizing several studies and policy initiatives that will lead to a better understanding of the children's plight in this country. These studies include a child activity survey that will provide much-needed oversight of the child labor situation in Namibia.

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[9] These cases were violent/unwilling rapes, not "merely" teachers having sexual relations with children (which would constitute statutory rape—and which is largely unreported).

Also, different surveys have fed into the Program Advisory Committee on Child Labor's (PACC's) policy planning efforts. PACC's efforts have led to the establishment of a comprehensive (draft) policy framework and an action plan addressing child labor. The International Labour Organization program Towards the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (TECL) has supported these efforts. The program, which is at its end, will be extended into a second phase (TECL-II) for the implementation of the action plan.

The current legislation on children, The Children's Act, dates back to 1960 (Kinderwet NK 33 van, 1960) and provides references to child labor (e.g., children's street trading, public entertainment, and begging are prohibited). However, in view of the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, especially in terms of the increased number of AIDS orphans, the legislation contained in this bill is outdated.

In 2004, a new Labor Act was passed (Government Gazette 3339). This Act was plagued with imprecision and errors, and the bill is currently in the process of being updated (Labor Act of 2006). The new bill will not change the basic premises of the legislation on child labor.

On the prohibition and restriction of child labor, the Labor Act (No. 266, 2004) prescribes that "a person must not employ, or require or permit, a child to work in any circumstances prohibited in terms of this section." Employment is age-restricted: "A person must not employ a child under the age of 14 years." Children between 14 and 16 (Chapter 2, paragraph 3[3]) and between 16 and 18 years (paragraph 3[4]) are allowed to work under specific circumstances.

The National Policy on Orphans and Vulnerable Children (Ministry of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, 2004) expands the children's legislation, but does not include a framework to address child labor-related issues. Different policies and laws do not share a common understanding or definition of the concept of child labor. Accordingly, regulations on child labor are at times contradictory.

II   PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In July 2004, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) signed a cooperative agreement worth US$9 million to implement an EI project in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Swaziland to support the goals of the Education Initiative and improve access to quality education as a means of combating exploitive child labor in Southern Africa. To achieve these goals, AIR identified the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Increased public awareness on the importance of children's education, children's rights, and the worst forms of child labor (WFCL).

- **Objective 2:** Improved educational opportunities for working children and children at risk.

- **Objective 3:** Improved social services for working children, children at risk, and their families or caregivers.

- **Objective 4:** Strengthened integration of government policies, laws, and regulations to promote the entry of working children into the formal education system and prevent children at risk from dropping out.

AIR aims to withdraw or prevent at least 10,000 children in Southern Africa from involvement in WFCL. RECLISA's regional headquarters is located in Pretoria, South Africa, and AIR works in consortium with one or two organization(s) in each of the five countries concerned. In Namibia, Africare is responsible for implementing project activities.

Two main challenges confront Namibia: Correcting one of the world's worst income disparities and controlling one of the world's worst AIDS epidemics. The combination of these two problems places a heavy toll on the country's children. The Caprivi Strip, in particular, has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the country (at nearly 40%), resulting in many orphans and child-headed households. Prone to drought and floods, Caprivi is the poorest part of Namibia. The children find themselves at particular risk for child labor, combined with emotional trauma, stigma, and abuse, as well as a lack of education and health care.

RECLISA (through its implementing partner Africare) aims to assist 1,775 OVC in the Caprivi Region. To accomplish this, Africare planned to establish community-based protection mechanisms to care for its beneficiaries, centering on Care, Protection, and Empowerment (COPE) Clubs based in communities and at schools. The direct beneficiaries of the project (i.e., the members of the COPE Clubs) were also to benefit from a Resource Exchange Program (REP): RECLISA would purchase supplies to improve the quality of education in the target schools. In return, participating schools were supposed to waive school fees for 30 beneficiary OVC, enrolled in the COPE Clubs for a period of two years. Africare developed this strategy, rather than giving direct grants to schools, because USDOL cannot permit grantees such as AIR to give sub-grants. The project also had as its aim to train teachers as COPE Club Patrons on life skills, using a manual developed by Africare (this manual includes resources for counseling and dealing with grief).

The third component of RECLISA's work in Namibia aimed at improving caregivers' food security through food production and processing. Beneficiary parents and caregivers were to be associated in a loose type of organization (which we call "COPE/Caregivers Club" in this report). RECLISA was to offer the COPE/Caregivers Club technical training and equipment to maintain community gardens. The project also aimed at offering materials and seeds, as well as assistance in negotiating land rights. Finally, the project had as its goal to set up Child Welfare Subcommittees in each target community. These committees were supposed to be responsible for follow-up of the overall project implementation. Each committee was also supposed to select a person to be its cluster representative (school districts in Namibia are subdivided into clusters) and these cluster representatives were then to be represented at the Regional OVC Forum (sponsored by the Ministry of Gender/UNICEF), which coordinates local OVC initiatives. The initially planned structure, adhered to until midterm (as described above), was subsequently modified.

The project was implemented by Africare, one of the largest private and charitable U.S. organizations assisting Africa.[10] The organization was created in 1970 and its activities now reach 25 countries in every major region of Sub-Saharan Africa. Since its founding, Africare has delivered more than US$710 million in assistance. Africare's programs address needs in three principal areas:

- Health and HIV/AIDS.

- Food security and agriculture.

- Emergency response.

In addition to its work in focus areas, the organization also supports programs in the following domains:

- Water resource development.

- Environmental management.

- Literacy and vocational training.

- Micro-enterprise development.

- Civil-society development and governance.

The organization has developed specific tools for emergency response to HIV/AIDS problems. Among these is the aforementioned Community-Based Orphan Care, Protection, and Empowerment Project, currently implemented in Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. A similar model, also called COPE (Care, Protection, and Empowerment Clubs), was developed in the RECLISA project.

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[10] Information in this section comes from field interviews, Africare's Annual Report (2006), and from the organization's website: http://www.africare.org.

The COPE Clubs in Nsudano and Kabbe initially developed *Heroes Books* through assistance from UNICEF/Philippi trust. Later, RECLISA/Africare generalized the use of *Heroes Books* in all 60 project sites. Since the evaluation finds that the *Heroes Books* initiative is a best practice example, the section below describes the books more extensively.

The *Heroes Books* are a psychosocial tool that helps OVC to create stories depicting themselves as heroes. The children create the *Heroes Books* themselves, and the books are generally organized into 10 chapters: (1) Myself, (2) My Hero in My Life, (3) My First Memory, (4) My Family Road, (5) My Community, (6) My Problem, (7) My Name, (8) My Shining Moment, (9) My Tricks and Tactics, and (10) The Hero Me. In the first chapter, the child introduces him or herself (e.g., name, age, hobbies). In the second chapter, the child identifies a hero, which could be a family member or a friend that has been important in the life of the child. Then the book goes on to identify and describe past memories, as well as his or her family and community. Hence, the book explains the child's background in his or her own words and drawings. The book goes on to identify the child's "problem," which is presented in a matrix depicting various levels of challenges related to his or her daily life. The problems revolve around food security ("sometimes starvation takes place in our family"), death ("from the day my father died, everything changed in my life"), lack of happiness ("happy just comes a second or an hour per day"), or anger ("[I] hit my sister"). A tendency noted during the final evaluation's fieldwork, was children's suicide wishes; statements such as "kill myself" were frequently read in the problem matrixes. The seventh chapter—My Name, is used for school friends who encourage the author (e.g., "she is brave," "he is kind"). In My Shining Moment, the child describes a nice memory from the past; in "Tricks and Tactics," the child describes ways to cope ("I am wearing clean clothes—it shows that I am clean and that I'm strong"); and in the last chapter, the child describes why he or she is a hero ("I'm a hero because I'm overcoming my problems because I will make a difference by becoming an engineer").

The project intervened at several levels and had a very complex structure. A schematic depiction of the administrative levels of project intervention and the project's activities at each administrative level follows.

**Table 1: Schematic Description of Administrative Levels
of Project Intervention and Project Activities**

Level	Project Activites
Community Level	• COPE Clubs for 30 beneficiaries per school x 60 schools • Resource Exchange Program • Gardens (set up by schools or caregivers) • COPE/Caregivers Club
Constituency Level	• OVC forums in all six constituencies • Training about WFCL provided
Regional Level (Caprivi)	• OVC Forum • Awareness raising & coordination about OVC work • Child Labor Forum • Awareness raising & coordination about WFCL
National Level (Windhoek)	• National Conference on Child Labor & Participation in TECL/PACC policy initiatives

As noted in the table, the project is operating at four levels:

- At a local (community) level, the project has set up COPE clubs, COPE/Caregivers Club, and gardens. Also, beneficiaries are exempted from school fees through the Resource Exchange program.

- At a constituency level, the project is training members of OVC forums on child labor-related issue.

- At a regional level, the project is participating in the regional OVC forum, and it has created a parallel child labor forum.

- At a national level, the project has been involved in policy processes through its participation in the TECL-funded PACC and in co-organizing the national conferences on child labor.

These activities are not operating in isolation; there are both horizontal and vertical synergies. For example, many OVC are involved in maintaining the gardens, Africare is raising awareness in the Regional OVC Forum, and Africare together with trained OVC forum members (at constituency level) have raised awareness about WFCL in the communities.
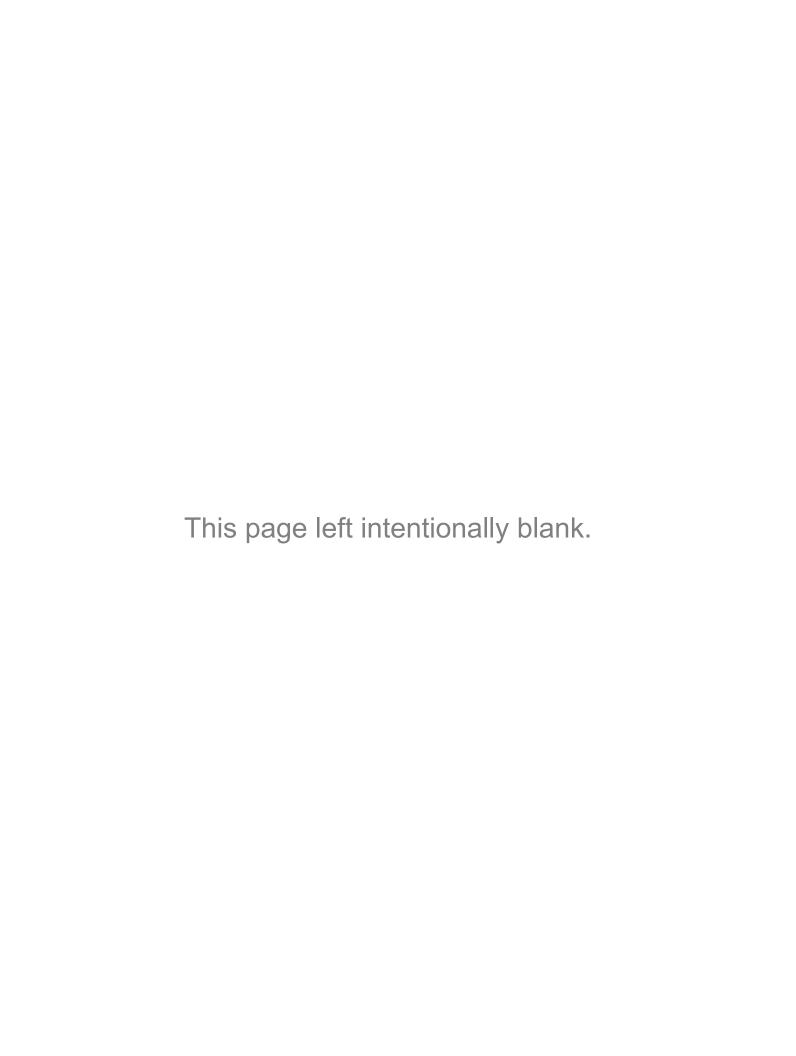
III   EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The final evaluation looks at the project as a whole and its overall impact in relation to its stated targets and objectives. The activities carried out during the four years of the Cooperative Agreement are reviewed and assessed with regard to their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability.

The evaluation aims to—

- Help individual organizations identify areas of good performance and areas where project implementation can be improved.

- Assist OCFT to learn more about what is or is not working in terms of the overall conceptualization and design of EI projects within the broad OCFT technical cooperation program framework.

- Assess the degree to which objectives relevant to the country-specific situation they address have been achieved.

- Assess progress in terms of children's working and educational status (i.e., withdrawal and prevention from WFCL; enrollment, retention, and completion of educational programs).

The evaluation addresses issues of project design and implementation, sustainability, and impact; it will provide an opportunity for AIR, USDOL, and national stakeholders to identify key achievements and shortfalls and factors that may have affected project progress. It will help to identify lessons learned, effective strategies, and models of intervention for the future; and will help to assess the efficiency of project management at both country and regional levels. It will also assess how recommendations from the midterm evaluation were implemented and to what effect.

The evaluation is an objective inquiry that can facilitate any corrective action and encourage the development and further use of successful aspects of the project. Ultimately, the purpose is to assure that vulnerable children's needs are being met through project interventions and that the best possible use is made of emerging good practice. It is, above all, a learning process.

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IV   EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was carried out by three evaluators, one covering South Africa and Botswana, one for Namibia and Swaziland, and the team leader who covered Lesotho and regional aspects of the project. Each evaluator provided a report for each of the countries they visited, which then served to create a global analysis and synthesis of regional findings.

DESK REVIEW

After an analysis of the purpose and scope of the evaluation and the specific questions in the Terms of Reference (TOR), the evaluators reviewed the following key project documents:

- RECLISA Cooperative Agreement.

- RECLISA Project Document.

- Country Needs Assessments.

- Project Performance Management Plans.

- Various RECLISA Factsheets.

- Technical Progress Reports.

- The Midterm Evaluation reports and project responses to recommendations.

SELECTION OF SITES TO BE VISITED

The sites for field visits in Namibia were selected in consultation with implementing partners with the aim of covering a cross section of activities to include those that have been both more and less successful, and some of the less accessible project sites. Both random and purposeful sampling strategies (in the selection of sites) were used (about 50% of each).

COMMUNITY VISITS

In all, six community visits were conducted during two days of fieldwork, including meeting with COPE Patrons, COPE Club participants, COPE/Parent Club participants, teachers, school counselors, and principals.

INTERVIEWS WITH AFRICARE

Throughout the evaluation process, an ongoing dialogue was kept with Africare to triangulate the conclusions and statements of the stakeholders with Africare's view of the activities.

INTERVIEWS AT NATIONAL LEVEL

National-level interviews were conducted with international organizations, including UNICEF, USAID, and ILO; interviews were also conducted with Namibia's national institutions, including MOE, the Ministry of Gender, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the National Institute for Educational Development (at Okahandja), as well as with national NGOs such as Change of Lifestyle and Lifeline/Childline.

INTERVIEWS AT A REGIONAL LEVEL (CAPRIVI)

In many instances, the interviews at Katima Mulilo (Caprivi) duplicated the institutions visited in Windhoek, including a Regional MOE representative, a Gender representative, a Labor representative, as well as visits to the local hospital and Health administration.

CONFERENCE CALLS

The calls included the evaluation team's interviews with the USDOL project manager, AIR/RECLISA team, AIR's Washington DC manager, as well as individual conference calls with country-based project managers to plan the evaluation.

STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS/DEBRIEFS

A stakeholder meeting was conducted in Namibia on May 16. It was attended by Africare and other stakeholders and partners, including representatives from MOE, Ministry of Labor, and MGECW. (See Annex C for the PowerPoint presentation shown at the stakeholders' meeting.)

V   FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section examines how the project is responding to Namibia's education and child labor environment, the strategies it has developed, the activities it is implementing, and how sustainable these activities are likely to be. To achieve these objectives, the section is divided into the following four parts:

1. **Project Design/Implementation Issues.** This section looks at the degree to which the Namibia project component has supported the EI goals and to what extent it has met its stated purpose and outputs.

2. **Regional Aspects of Management, Capacity Building, and Awareness Raising.** This section looks at the Namibian, and in particular Africare's, conception of the regional management structure of RECLISA, as well as the capacity building and awareness raising offered by AIR/RECLISA.

3. **Sustainability and Impact.** This section looks at Africare's strategies for sustainability of project actions, as well as the project's impact to date on the various stakeholders.

4. **Specific Topics Related to RECLISA/Namibia.** This section relates to specific USDOL concerns about Namibia.

The findings of the evaluation are organized around the questions posed by USDOL in the TOR, taking the opportunity to not only respond to each question but to expand on the issues concerned as appropriate. *Conclusions* and *Recommendations* completes the evaluation of the relevant issues.

5.1   PROJECT DESIGN/IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

5.1.1   RECLISA Implementation

1. Changes from the Initial Project Plan

RECLISA/Namibia was for the most part implemented according to its design and work plans. The major project activities have been implemented in a timely fashion. Some activities had to be changed; for example, the project had initially planned to train "activators" (from the Ministry of Gender, Equality, and Social Welfare) working at constituent level to provide psychosocial follow-up in the communities. However, these activators (one per constituent) were tied up in the work related to identification of OVC. Although three of the six constituency activators were trained by RECLISA, Africare later opted to train one caregiver per community (among the COPE/Caregivers' Club) instead of continuing to work with the activators. In all, 35 caregivers were trained (from 35 of the project's 60 target communities).

Further, the vegetable gardens encountered many problems, including lack of fencing (and thereby little security), lack of water, and, in some places, drought. Instead of pursuing COPE/Caregivers' community gardens, RECLISA opted to transform them into school gardens (of which more than 40 still are operative). The schoolteacher responsible for agriculture classes, often assisted by OVC, is now responsible for the garden. In some cases, produce has been sold and parts of the proceeds used to purchase school supplies for OVC.

Also, the project has given seeds (cassava and sweet potato) directly to the OVC caregivers to improve the families' food security. This activity started quite recently, and thus the results of this distribution are not yet known.

2. *Successes and Challenges*

According to the project respondents, the project strategy's major successes include the following:

- COPE Clubs for OVC and for caregivers.

- The school garden initiatives.

- Awareness-raising activities.

- The use of *Heroes Books* as a psychosocial tool.

- The life skills curriculum used in the COPE Clubs.

- The Resource Exchange Program.

- The project's implementation in the most needy region of the country.

The project challenges include the following (in addition to the challenges mentioned in the previous section):

- The budget for the school gardens was insufficient to ensure adequate services in all communities. Also, some areas of project implementation were inadequate for implementation of gardens.

- The COPE Patrons have to conduct COPE meetings outside of their work hours, without any incentives to do so. It follows that many of them are complaining of "burnout."

- Some COPE Patrons did not speak the language of the beneficiaries. Hence, due to the lack of communication, the overall impact of the skills training and COPE sessions were minor. It should be noted that the other classes conducted by the teachers (mathematics,

languages, etc.) were unlikely to be more successful than the COPE session, due to the language problem.[11]

- There is a quick rotation of teachers (hence, also of COPE Patrons), and over 20 Patrons (33%) have been reassigned to new schools. The project has tried to identify new Patrons where necessary. In two cases, it has not been able to identify a teacher as a COPE Patron and the project has instead used caregivers to act as a COPE Patron.

- The beneficiary children in the COPE Clubs are between ages 7 and 18. It is difficult to create a life skills curriculum that is adequate and interesting for such a large span. Also, the children at the lower primary level finish their school day at 11:00 a.m. and have to return later in the day for the COPE activities. Some of the children cannot return to school in the afternoon because they live far away. Others return to attend COPE classes in the afternoon, but are not very active since they have not eaten any food at home during lunchtime. (A "very small" number of teachers do conduct two COPE sessions, one from 11:00 to 12:00 a.m., and one from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m.)

In general, many project challenges are connected to inherent policy issues in Namibia; for example, the rotation of teachers and the exams-oriented curriculum which focuses on math and physics with little regard for life skills and COPE-type programs. Further, sports activities (interschool competition) absorb more than three weeks, and often take place during the "slot" reserved for RECLISA. Likewise, it is difficult to organize COPE Clubs during exam periods and during the study periods before exams. In all, there are at least seven weeks of the school year without COPE Clubs (not counting holidays). In other words, the COPE Clubs' timing does not necessarily follow the needs of the children, but is dependent on the school-year program set up by MOE and each school's administration.

5.1.2   RECLISA Design

During the evaluation fieldwork, most respondents found that the strategy of the project was "clearly addressing child labor issues" by supporting OVC's schooling. The project design was complex and required extensive capacity building for all stakeholders.

The project included four main subcomponents, each of which could be a standalone project (the REP, the COPE Clubs, the COPE/Caregiver Clubs, and the garden initiatives). There are advantages to combining all four subcomponents into one holistic approach that addresses multiple risk factors for OVC. For example, even if school fees were waived, a vulnerable child who lacked psychosocial support and food would not be likely to attend school successfully. Although some of the project activities may not prove sustainable (see Section 5.3: Exit Strategy), USDOL has recommended to continue implementing similarly integrated projects.

The tracking system does not allow for comparison between dropout rates of beneficiary versus non-beneficiary children. Project personnel said that enrollment and retention of the beneficiaries had generally improved (as compared with other non-RECLISA beneficiary OVC in the schools).

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[11] In other words, this was not a project-specific problem.

It should be noted that in Namibia, the availability of alternative modes of education for OVC (e.g., vocational training and NFE) is limited. Most of the caregivers prefer sending their children to primary school rather than alternative schooling. The project's focus on primary and secondary education, in view of its beneficiaries, therefore seems appropriate.

5.1.3   Relations to Existing Government Efforts

The project raised awareness of child labor at national and regional (Caprivi) levels, and in particular tried to demonstrate the interrelation between child labor, the plight of OVC, and education. As a result, stakeholders at all levels are now much more aware about the concept of WFCL. The project filled a gap, both in knowledge about child labor and in service provision, by addressing psychological and economic barriers caused by stigma and school fees. The REP provided teacher-pupil ratio support to the schools in terms of equipment (e.g., teaching materials and sports equipment), which had a positive impact on quality of schooling for all the students. The project also offered much-needed counseling through the COPE Clubs and *Heroes Books.*

The project raised awareness about child labor at various government and NGO venues. For example, Africare provided training to 43 members of the OVC Constituency Forums in Caprivi. Generally, it could be said that the project supplemented the all-too-few government initiatives to strengthen OVC schooling and raise awareness about WFCL. However, the Caprivi location of Africare's office somewhat limited the project's alignment with central government efforts. For example, interviewees at MGECW in Windhoek did not know about the project, and even the MOE representatives in Caprivi only had a limited knowledge about the project (they gained some general knowledge about it during the national conference on child labor but did not, for example, have a more detailed understanding of the functioning of the COPE Clubs). One reason for the lack of knowledge about project interventions may possibly be related to the lack of interest for child-centered activities by many senior officials at MOE (see Section 1.2.2 on the government's education policies).

The project was successful in coordinating activities with the OVC permanent task force at MOE, and in particular with the counseling service. A representative from this latter noted the following:

> *There are many forms of abuse, especially among OVC… The division is trying to train one teacher per school in counseling… No time credit is given for counseling [i.e., the teacher has to do it on his or her own time]; the attitude of the management is that, in the African culture, children aren't supposed to talk about their problems to adults. We try to change this mindset, not only at children's level, but also at senior management levels at the MOE.*

Africare contracted the counseling division at MOE for the organization of a three-day "crash course" for 20 RECLISA participants (mainly COPE Patrons) in basic and bereavement counseling. Also, the COPE Patrons and/or project staff, when they had problems with certain OVC in the COPE Clubs, referred the beneficiaries to the school counselor for additional follow-up (sometimes the school counselor also became a COPE Patron). In this way, the project was able to build a network among beneficiaries, caregivers, and school counselors. Most of the people involved in these activities saw the need to reform many current practices of the

education system (e.g., corporal punishment) and were working actively to this end—despite senior management level's resistance to such reforms.

5.1.4   USDOL Goals

Education Initiative Goal 1: *Awareness Raising of the Importance of Education for All Children*

Although the understanding of the project goals varied,[12] in most cases RECLISA successfully raised awareness on the concept of child labor and on the need for education through awareness raising (1) at the community level through the COPE and COPE/Caregiver Clubs; (2) at the regional level through participation in the Regional OVC Forum and by organizing a child labor forum; and (3) at a national level through the Namibian conference on child labor in January 2008, as well as through cooperation with the TECL program).

The project did not have as a mandate the expansion of education infrastructure, but helped improve the quality of education through the REP. Further, the COPE Clubs and life skills curriculum has enhanced the quality of schooling for OVC.

Education Initiative Goal 2: *Strengthen Systems That Encourage Working Children and Those at Risk of Working to Attend School*

This initiative has been supported by (1) indirectly paying the school fees for at-risk children (through the REP); and (2) providing counseling and follow-up through COPE and COPE/Caregiver Clubs. The project worked almost exclusively at the level of prevention and did not actively withdraw children from work.

Child Labor Initiative Goal 3: *Strengthen National Institutions and Policies on Education and Child Labor*

This initiative has been supported through the project manager's participation in the Regional OVC Forum and in PACC—the Namibia branch of ILO's South African-based program, TECL. As one of the direct results of the policy work of the project, the new education policy on OVC includes the targeting of working children and children at risk of work as part of its OVC strategy.

Education Initiative Goal 4: *Supporting Research and the Collection of Reliable Data on Child Labor*

This initiative has been supported through the project's participation in PACC, and thereby through the feeding of case studies and other relevant information into the policy process.

Education Initiative Goal 5: *Ensure the Long-Term Sustainability of These Efforts*

This initiative is supported through capacity-building efforts (e.g., through the training of teachers to become COPE Patrons). It is hoped that the COPE Clubs will be sustainable. In two

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[12] Some project stakeholders lacked a clear understanding of the concept of child labor, even at the end of the project.

schools, the principal and teachers found the COPE initiative so useful that they launched COPE Clubs for all OVC in the schools (RECLISA-funded COPE Clubs only accept 30 students). Also, in the ending phase of the project, a second round of the REP program at each school ensures the maintenance of all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation.

The Regional Education Counselor and UNICEF have expressed interest in the expansion of the COPE Clubs to the remaining 38 schools in Caprivi that are not yet benefiting from RECLISA support; this would mean that all the schools in the region will be benefiting from COPE Clubs. Currently, some funding has been secured for this expansion.

5.1.5   Direct Educational Interventions

The project provides three direct education services to all the beneficiaries of the project (and one indirect educational service in the form of its support to the COPE/Caregivers Club):

1. **The Resource Exchange Program and exemption of school fees for OVC.** The REP helps improve the quality of education provided through provision of school materials such as books or paper for the classroom, and sports equipment or materials for gardening. The schools, for their part, exempt OVC from school fees for two years as a 'payment' for this provision of materials. During the evaluation fieldwork, it was noted that although the grace period of two years has expired for the students enrolled in the first generation of learners, the schools have not claimed fees from the OVC for the current year. In the ending phase of the project (June 2008), AIR/RECLISA provided additional funds to Africare for a second round of the program at each school, in the recommended amount of NAD 1,000 per school for each of the 60 schools. In return, the schools have agreed to maintain all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation.

2. **COPE Clubs.** The project trained at least one teacher (or caregiver) at each target school (the COPE Patron) and contributed to improvement of the curriculum with the COPE manuals and life skills curriculum developed by Africare. The COPE Clubs provided psychosocial support to the beneficiaries and contributed to breaking sentiments of stigma and isolation among OVC.

3. **Gardens.** The gardens helped the schools' agriculture classes (which are mandatory for schools in Namibia) and, in some circumstances, directly benefited the beneficiaries and/or the caregivers. Since the school garden initiative in many cases was changed from a caregiver-dependent initiative to a school-dependent one, Africare also distributed seeds directly to caregivers as an additional service.

5.1.6   Identification of Beneficiaries

The project used a Child Assessment Form for identifying beneficiaries and their enrollment into COPE Clubs. The forms include questions about the household food security, its ability to pay school fees, and about the child's psychosocial health.

The selection of children was based on the principal and COPE Patrons' identification of school children that were orphans and/or in a particularly vulnerable situation (e.g., child-headed

households and households needing food aid), against specific criteria established in advance through the assessment forms (which again were related to the criteria set forth in the Performance Monitoring Plan). During interviews, school personnel stated that the identification system was adequate because they were aware of which of the households had problems and could therefore more easily identify children at risk of WFCL. Follow-up and monitoring was done through the intermediary of the COPE Patron and the COPE/Caregiver Clubs. The COPE/Caregivers Clubs would normally also follow up on the working status of children, and signal any problems to teachers or the RECLISA project's fieldworkers. However, the project did not have a system that systematically tracked the working status of the children.

It should be noted that Namibian children in school were the main beneficiaries of the project, whereas many working children in Caprivi were not eligible for project support because they largely remained outside the school structures (in many cases, they were OVC from Zambia and Angola who had crossed the border into Caprivi to seek work in the region). Accordingly, the project targeted OVC at risk of child labor instead of actively withdrawing children at work. The evaluator finds this strategy reasonable in view of the difficulties faced by many OVC at school.

5.1.7   Student Tracking System (STS)

The Student Tracking System (STS), a USDOL-provided database with the purpose of facilitating the tracking of beneficiaries, did not function well. It did not prove adequate for generating the reports required by USDOL and presented a number of technical difficulties that required regular support from AIR/RECLISA.

When children graduate, the COPE Patrons sometimes recruit new members to maintain COPE Club participation at its initial enrollment number of 30 members. The newly recruited beneficiaries were not tracked by the STS. However, this particular problem was not due to STS limitations. When beneficiaries graduated, dropped out, or transferred, the Patrons sometimes "fill the slots" with new learners to make up the 30 allowed per school. Africare did not capture all these learners in the STS, as it was focusing on reporting only on the original 30 (and "replacement" learners who started close to the time at which their cohort began). In other words, Africare concentrated on those beneficiaries whom RECLISA supported from the beginning. Hence, a relatively small number of learners who were added later than their cohort were not recorded into STS nor counted in project reports.

Project staff found that the field visit by Juarez's Jimin Patel in August 2006 significantly improved the ability to use the existing system effectively. The STS training model prescribed by USDOL, which relies on written manuals and a small amount of training resulting from short sessions at the annual EI conferences, proved inadequate.

5.1.8   Awareness-Raising Activities

The project, through the COPE and COPE/Caregiver Clubs, raised community awareness about the plight of OVC. The participation of project personnel and cluster representatives in the local OVC forum was also a means to exchange views on child labor.

Additionally, Africare created a Child Labor forum in Caprivi in October 2007. This forum, the first of its kind in Namibia, is an initiative that will contribute to increased awareness on WFCL in the region. Representatives from Red Cross, Catholic AIDS Action, MGECW, the Ministry of Youth, and the Ministry of Justice are, at present, members of this forum; its main goal being to coordinate regional child labor-related activities and to create awareness. The evaluator noted an expressed enthusiasm among project stakeholders to participate in awareness-raising activities. For example, a senior labor officer in Caprivi explained how she had gone to communities to "combat child labor" in a joint USDOL-MGECW effort. Visibly, the RECLISA efforts had led to an increased local interest and knowledge about WFCL.

Africare has also participated in radio and TV shows and in press conferences. Much of the media attention was generated as a result of the national conference on child labor, a main forum to create awareness and public debate about WFCL. As a result, in addition to the media interest, Africare has also been requested by local authorities to extend the organization's activities to other regions, and it has been invited to participate in the implementation of the Namibian OVC program funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

Furthermore, the project tried to create awareness among COPE Patrons about corporal punishment in schools. The use of corporal punishment is in many cases connected to OVC's plight. As an example, during field interviews an education officer explained how a little boy had to run to fetch bones from a butcher at 4:00 a.m. every morning so that he would still be back in time for school. His weak parents used the bones to cook soup. His teacher, who did not understand why the child was so tired at school, frequently abused the child verbally. It was not until the boy was killed in a car accident that his morning work became known. This case exemplifies the need for awareness raising at all levels, and also the need for multileveled support; not only is it necessary to tell parents and caregivers about the problems connected to WFCL, it is also necessary to raise awareness among teachers. It should be noted that awareness-raising efforts in a case like this are deemed to fail unless the project can actually provide food to the family as a substitute for the opportunity costs of schooling. Generally, the RECLISA Namibia's multipronged interventions have successfully balanced awareness-raising messages (at both school and caregiver levels) with actual services (payment of school fees, provision of seeds, psychosocial support).

5.1.9   Midterm Recommendations

In general, the evaluator found that the recommendations from the midterm evaluation had been successfully followed-up on. It was also noticed that AIR/RECLISA and Africare had tracked the follow-up of the midterm recommendations in detail. The following recommendations are relevant to AIR/RECLISA and Africare:[13]

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[13] The midterm evaluation included the following recommendations to USDOL, for which AIR/RECLISA or Africare could take no action: (1) USDOL should require grant applicants to use more participatory approaches in the conception phase; and (2) for new projects, USDOL should promote the use of existing community structures instead of establishing new committees.

1. **Define child labor and train stakeholders.** Operationalize the TECL definition by introducing *drama* sessions in COPE Clubs,[14] discussions with communities through CLCs, and further training of the CLCs that need training.

2. **Further train co-Patrons on corporal punishment and verbal abuse.** Fieldworkers advocated teaching without the use of fear. During the evaluation fieldwork, the Patrons seemed aware of the project's stance as related to corporal punishment, child labor, and child protection.

3. **Develop training program for child welfare subcommittees.** This training was provided in July through August 2007 (but proved insufficient to ensure the sustainability of these committees).

4. **Use the REP as a transition toward the education development fund.** The register of project beneficiaries was submitted to MOE for consideration. Twelve participating schools were selected for the EDF pilot phase.

5. **Ensure that STS functions appropriately.** AIR/RECLISA provided assistance with the Technical Progress Report figures and streamlining of STS.

6. **Further involve local stakeholders and projects.** The project improved its cooperation with representatives in the MOE, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Security. During the final evaluation, representatives from key line ministries said that the project's cooperation with them was adequate.

7. **Regional: Copy and share project documentation with TECL.** Currently, the two projects are exchanging documents (this is the responsibility of the regional office). Both TECL and AIR/RECLISA noted improved communication between the projects during the second part of the project implementation. The two projects also co-organized a national conference on child labor, which improved the two projects' effectiveness at the level of policy and awareness raising.

8. **Promote widespread use of COPE Clubs.** Fieldworkers have assisted two schools in setting up COPE Club mechanisms for the entire school.

9. **Permit multiple project support for one community garden.** Africare felt that this recommendation could not be justified on the basis that the communities that received RECLISA support for establishing gardens should not get support from other projects implemented by Africare. Africare, therefore, withdrew support from their agriculture project in communities benefiting from RECLISA. The communities were not given the choice of which project to participate in, and some local stakeholders felt that they were "punished" for their participation in RECLISA. In the opinion of this evaluator, in some cases it may be more useful to provide multidimensional support to one community and

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[14] Drama has been incorporated in the training of caregivers and patrons. The drama training was facilitated by an officer from the Ministry of Youth. Learners also performed at the Child Labor Conference (mentored by the Patrons who had attended the training).

ensure sustainable development in that community, rather than spreading out interventions.[15]

10. **Create TORs and training for Child Welfare Subcommittees.** Africare created TORs and trained committees in July through August 2007. The main task of these committees was to identify RECLISA beneficiaries.

11. **Define sustainability and exit strategies.** Discussions with the undersecretary of education accrued to have the beneficiaries profit from the EDF. Although the project was active on this issue, the structure of the RECLISA project—and the policy choices of MOE—were such that it would be very difficult to make the activities sustainable. Instead, during the ending phase of the project, negotiated a second round of the program at each school to ensure maintenance of all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation.

5.1.10   Local NGOs and Other Organizations

The RECLISA/Namibia project did not use subcontracts and therefore did not build capacity in other NGOs and/or community-based organizations in Namibia. It worked directly with the target communities through the creation of COPE/Caregiver Clubs and Child Welfare Subcommittees. The project was not designed to use subcontracts or build capacity in other Namibian NGOs. However, Africare worked with other organizations to support the EI goals; for example, by helping build community capacity by organizing workshops for members of the Regional OVC Forum.

Some cooperation has taken place among projects; for example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has supported the RECLISA-established gardens with water pumps, tanks, and fencing within the framework of their Junior Farmer Field School Approach.

5.2   REGIONAL ASPECTS OF MANAGEMENT, CAPACITY BUILDING, AND AWARENESS RAISING

5.2.1   RECLISA's Regional Approach

Africare found the regional approach "difficult" because of the multiple layers in administration of the project. "First we have to convince AIR/RECLISA about our choices and strategies, and then we have to convince USDOL." Africare staff found that the procedural aspects of the project hampered project implementation; they would have preferred to work directly with the USDOL.

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[15] The evaluator would like to point out that, although he fully understands and respects Africare's decision, current research has shown that, in most cases of development practice, actions do not generate effect in a linear fashion, but interact in an exponential fashion. In other words, it may be more cost-effective (but not necessarily more equitable) to concentrate interventions in one target area. The impact of several activities concentrated in one community will be exponentially more efficient to generate change than one activity implemented per community.

Further, it was noted that the multi-country approach delayed response time from the coordinating agency:

> *AIR is responsible for many countries; it may take some time before they can provide support. It would have been more effective if they had one person responsible for each country.*

Africare also said that the organization had received "substantial help" from AIR/RECLISA in organizing the national conference on child labor. It was recognized that it would have been difficult to organize the conference from Caprivi without any outside assistance. Also, interventions at the senior MOE level in May and June 2007 (to discuss the national conference on child labor, project activities, and sustainability-related aspects of the exit plan) were done by a tripartite delegation including Africare, AIR/RECLISA, and TECL staff members. The evaluator finds that, although these meetings had a limited impact,[16] this cross-project and cross-agency coordinated intervention is an example of best practice.

As an example of the regional approach's cross-fertilization of ideas, it should be noted that the *Heroes Books* model is already successfully implemented by RECLISA in Botswana. Also, the Namibia staff had an opportunity to visit Swaziland and other RECLISA countries to exchange ideas and/or to receive training.

5.2.2   Building Management Capacity of Africare

The local Africare staff members dedicated to RECLISA were based in Katima Mulilo in Caprivi. They included the director of the Caprivi office (who, as the RECLISA project manager, oversaw all project management activities and reported to Africare's regional director); two project officers (a community activator and an agricultural officer); and an office assistant. Africare personnel generally felt that they had benefited from AIR/RECLISA's capacity-building activities. At midterm, virtually all core staff members of RECLISA/Namibia, including the director, the project manager, and the accountant, were reassigned; therefore, the new project staff needed a great deal of training and support from AIR/RECLISA.

In particular, AIR/RECLISA provided training in data analysis and accounting. This, it was noted, could be applied to other projects, and the training proved "very useful" for Africare as an organization.

5.2.3   The National Child Labor Conference as a Strategy to Increase Awareness

The national child labor conference (organized in January 2008) was a useful tool to raise awareness on the issue of child labor. It had several positive (and practical) outcomes: (1) the problem of child labor and child abuse received media coverage that generated a

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[16] The AIR/RECLISA project director noted that "in each RECLISA country, the most difficult ministry to work with was the Ministry of Education," and that the AIR/RECLISA staff had spent more time in Namibia than elsewhere, and obtained less results in terms of government takeover of activities, especially in terms of the EDF (see Section 5.3.5).

nationwide awareness and interest in the topic; (2) it helped improve coordination, because all the actors working on WFCL or related topics became known to each other (and exchanged information about ongoing work in the sector); and (3) Africare became known as a central actor working in the field of combating WFCL.

The national conference was co-organized with the TECL project, a strategy that the evaluator considers as an example of best practice. The impact of the conference, by being an integral part of the PACC process, was much more substantial than if AIR/RECLISA and Africare had organized the conference as a standalone event. A high-level interviewee at USDOL praised the conference, and noted that it would be "silly" if the conference had not been jointly organized by TECL and RECLISA. An April follow-up of the conference (through a TECL workshop in Windhoek) looked at practical ways to implement the newly established action plan to combat WFCL. The TECL/RECLISA synchronization of policy and field activities was emphasized as a positive feature by several interviewees; since then, it has prevented the newly established WFCL policy and action plan from being reduced to "just another policy"—that is, they ensured that it was accompanied by an implementation plan.

5.3   SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT

5.3.1   Exit Strategy

A sustainability matrix was developed early in the project and was a part of Africare's work plan. It may be useful to distinguish between two types of sustainability: (1) sustainability of activities, and (2) sustainability of protection structures and institutions.

As for the sustainability of activities, Africare and AIR/RECLISA have actively promoted the project and initiated discussions with the undersecretary of education to have the beneficiaries profit from the EDF, which would compensate the schools for the RECLISA beneficiaries' exempted school fees. As a result of the advocacy of AIR/RECLISA and Africare, MOE has indicated that it may be willing to pilot the EDF in 12 of the 60 schools (20%) receiving RECLISA aid (in total, it is expected that the EDF will be piloted in 15 Caprivi schools, of which 12 are RECLISA target schools).

Africare observed that the schools benefiting from the first generation of project support through the REP have still not claimed fees from the project beneficiaries. In the end phase of the project (June 2008), AIR/RECLISA provided additional funds to Africare for a second round of the program at each school in the recommended amount of NAD 1,000 per school for each of the 60 schools. In return, the schools have agreed to maintain all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation.

As for the sustainability of protection structures (COPE Clubs, COPE/Caregivers Clubs, Child Welfare Subcommittees), the evaluator believes that these structures will be short-lived unless some external aid or support is provided. Although the project has been actively working toward sustainability and an efficient exit strategy, the structure of the project itself and the policy choices of MOE are such that it would be very difficult to make the project structures sustainable. As noted in Section 1.2.2, the education system is heavily exams-oriented, and the government is encountering problems even in implementing its own skills program since it is not

a part of the national exams. Likewise, it would be very difficult for project activities, such as life skills training and COPE Clubs, to be sustainable since the teachers involved in these activities do not receive any time credit or incentives for their work. The exams-oriented structure of the education system is such that the principals have no incentive to encourage the existence of COPE Clubs or other skills projects in the school. Despite such lack of policy support, a few schools have committed themselves to continuing the COPE Clubs beyond the project's end:

> *We have many clubs [in this school]: an HIV/AIDS awareness club, an environment club,*
> *a debating club, and a choir. We have a culture of clubs here, and we'll see to it that the*
> *COPE Club continues.*

However, most interviewees noted that, without project support, the COPE Club was "not likely" to continue "for a long time."

The work of the Child Welfare Subcommittees was closely related to the project activities (in particular, to the selection of beneficiaries), and it is unlikely that these committees will be sustainable. However, the knowledge received about child labor is unlikely to be discarded, and so it must be concluded that the awareness raised at the individual level (among Child Welfare Subcommittee members) is sustainable.

As for the school gardens, it is to be noted that some schools and community members said they were willing to continue the garden work beyond the project's scope—although they would probably need assistance (for example, to plow the garden before planting). At this time, it is not known whether (or from where) they can access any such support.

The project director plans to conduct "exit workshops" over the next few weeks to "hand over the project to the communities." Project personnel said that there is a need for continuous food assistance to OVC and caregivers in the area and that the project-initiated school and community gardens are not sufficient to ensure food security. Further, in terms of sustainability, it should be noted that some COPE Patrons were trained to facilitate at workshops for newly recruited and/or refresher trainings for Patrons. Also, networking and collaboration ensured sustainability, since it led other organizations (e.g., UNICEF and AED) to provide funds to support Africare initiatives, as well extending the initiative to schools not receiving RECLISA support.

5.3.2   Impact

The following impact of the project can be seen at the community level:

- In the schools, OVC opportunity for schooling has increased because of the reimbursement of their school fees. Further, the COPE Clubs addressed stigma barriers and provided psychosocial support.

- The project increased knowledge of child labor in the communities through the COPE/Caregiver Clubs.

- The project contributed, through the school gardens or through the distribution of seeds, to OVC households' food security, although the yield is still very modest.

The project has contributed to raising awareness at a constituency, regional, and central level (see "Support for EI Goals" section above). In general, the project has had a positive impact at all levels of its intervention.

5.3.3   Capacity and Motivation of Community Members to Advocate Against Exploitive Child Labor

Africare provided training on child labor to the members of OVC constituency forums. The evaluator believes that this knowledge is now being integrated as a part of the forums' mandate, and that these OVC focal points will continue to advocate against child abuse. Moreover, the regional forum on child labor, if sustained, would motivate its members to continue the advocacy against WFCL at the community level.

The project has generated caregiver interest through the setup of COPE/Caregiver Clubs. In each of these clubs, a focal point received training from Africare on life skills. The evaluator believes that the caregivers as individuals will retain the knowledge of child labor, although they may not actively engage in community awareness raising.

Likewise, members of the Child Welfare Subcommittees will retain knowledge of child labor, and may even continue to raise community awareness about the issue. However, the evaluator believes that the committee members will conduct these activities *as individuals*, and that any future intervention of Child Welfare Subcommittees *as an institution* will be limited.

5.3.4   Impact on National or State Policies

Africare engaged with government policies through the organization's participation in PACC and the Regional OVC Forum. Also, the collaboration with TECL during the national conference on child labor proved to be an important tool to influence policy-level government partners. The project, with its location in Caprivi, had few other opportunities to influence government policymaking.

The project was praised for its direct interventions rather than for its focus on policies. According to a senior USDOL representative:

> *I like the RECLISA approach. It has as its first, practical objective to get children to school. Then [it supports] life skills training—and teaches the children to grow a garden; and finally, it provides psychosocial support. It's a good combination... Many projects are working with policy; if you want to change policy and also implement activities, you should aim for a seven- to eight-year project. For example, the Labor Act started to be revised in 1998 and it's finally being implemented now... Then there's a lack of funding to implement the new policies. We have so many beautiful policies—but they're all collecting dust on shelves.*

MOE officials found that most policymaking efforts were characterized by a top-down approach, and that many policies were "without implementing strategies." Hence, they emphasized the following:

> *The problem is not policy; the problem is implementation. The policymakers have not changed from authoritarian bureaucrats; they don't know how to engage in a democratic process... "Consultation" usually consists of telling people what to do. Whether the policies are going to be followed or not is not important for them.*

In other words, the policy efforts need to be accompanied with structural change on a government management level (which was clearly outside the mandate of RECLISA).

It should be noted that, as a direct result of the project's influence on policy, MOE included children engaged in labor as one of its target beneficiaries for the future EDF. This proved to be a mixed blessing, however, since MOE does not coordinate the identification of beneficiary children with MGECW (the lead agency for child protection). During the stakeholders meeting in Caprivi, the situation led to an outcry from MGECW and civil society representatives, who had for a long time been involved in identifying OVC and other children at risk for work, and who were not happy to hear that MOE would start a parallel identification effort, thus creating confusion about which children should receive aid from which government institution (see Section I, "Education").

5.3.5 Government Willingness to Carry On Project Implementation

Government institutions do not, at this point, have adequate knowledge about the project to consider carrying on project activities after the project has ended. In view of MOE's general policy choices, it is unlikely that the ministry will institutionalize the COPE Clubs or other project institutions. The project's main activities are connected to the COPE and COPE/Caregiver Clubs, the Child Welfare Subcommittees, the cluster involvement, and the REP.

The possible sustainability of these activities is considered below:

- **COPE Clubs.** Two schools, on their own initiative, are making COPE Clubs available to all the OVC in the schools (RECLISA-funded COPE Clubs only enroll 30 students per school). Most schools recognized the importance of this initiative and sought to continue or even expand the clubs. However, many teachers complained about the lack of incentives for COPE Patrons. The responsibilities related to being a COPE Patron were simply added to the teachers' normal workload. Without any overall changes in policy (e.g., including COPE as part of the mandatory curriculum), it is unlikely that many of the beneficiary schools will continue implementing the COPE activities after the project's end.

- **COPE/Caregiver Clubs.** It is uncertain which government institution could carry on training and follow-up of the COPE/Caregiver Clubs. Some of the Clubs may continue the work with the community gardens on their own, especially if they receive assistance to plow them. Also, many of the gardens need additional funding for fencing, and it is

uncertain which NGO or institution could provide the needed funding for this. At present, FAO and Africare are jointly supporting three gardens at Lusese, Mubiza, and Sesheke schools. Otherwise, the garden activities have largely been incorporated into the agriculture training of the schools; hence, the focus is school- rather than caregiver-driven. Thus, the project's initiative has been extended to almost all learners, as agriculture is a compulsory subject.

- **Child Welfare Subcommittees.** Most of the awareness-raising and follow-up functions of these committees have been transferred to the OVC focal points at the constituency level. Since subcommittees were largely working with project-specific matters such as identification of beneficiaries, it is not expected that the government (or a civil society organization) will use the committees in the future. Generally, the Constituency OVC Forum has replaced the Child Welfare Committees. Any work related to OVC has to be endorsed by this committee and recommended to the Regional OVC Forum. UNICEF has provided funding toward OVC-related initiatives through the Constituency OVC Forum, some of which is benefiting RECLISA schools.

- **Resource Exchange Program.** The EDF intends to support certain RECLISA-aided schools when the fund is piloted in Caprivi; MOE officials say that this will happen during the next school year.

5.3.6   Greatest and Least Impact

During the evaluation fieldwork, the interviewed children found that the interventions having the greatest impact on their lives were the COPE Clubs. They also said that their families lacked money to pay for school fees, uniforms, and books. The principals found the REP particularly useful and said it improved the quality of the schooling.

In many contexts, the COPE Clubs seemed to help the children access a better education through coming to terms with their own situation, realizing that they were not alone in a difficult situation. COPE Clubs also, according to children, were effective in combating effects of stigma. Less stigma problems would again encourage regular attendance in school and thereby decrease dropout. Some adults said that stigma is not a problem (because roughly half of the school population in Caprivi falls into the OVC category).

Africare's life skills manual and the generalized use of *Heroes Books* were other examples of best practice. Teachers said the *Heroes Books* were good tools to create a dialogue with the children, and children said they liked to make these books. In particular, the COPE Patrons emphasized that the books made the children proud of their families and thereby strengthened their self-confidence. During the debriefing about their *Heroes Books,* several children indicated that they were struggling with problems of anger (corporal punishment received from teachers is possibly just one reason for such emotions). Also, a frequent sentiment depicted in the *Heroes Books* was the children's suicidal thoughts (many children had indicated "kill myself" as a recurring thought). It should be noted that statistics from the project seem to indicate that suicide is not an issue for the project beneficiaries (the average suicide rate among the OVC population is not known; in any case, the sample size of the project beneficiaries would be too small to know to what extent the project had a positive impact on suicidal thoughts). Manuals developed

by the project were submitted to the Programme Quality Assurance (PQA) under MOE as resource material. PQA is responsible for all counseling initiatives.

In any case, the COPE Clubs and the *Heroes Books* seem to function as an emotional outlet; moreover, they contribute to reducing stigma. These activities also bring about an effect of "bridging" between children and the teachers, which helped the children to feel more at ease in school, and very probably resulted in a better retention rate.

5.3.7   Lessons Learned in Terms of Sustainability

RECLISA is intended as a "sister" project to TECL, and the latter is responsible for coordination of policy interventions concerning child labor. During the evaluation, it was noted that both projects enhanced impact and sustainability through their cooperation. The *Heroes Books* and COPE Clubs are examples of best practices that could be included as part of the general education curriculum and Namibia's OVC education policies.

5.4   SPECIFIC TOPICS RELATED TO RECLISA/NAMIBIA

5.4.1   The Care, Protection, and Empowerment Clubs

COPE Patrons and principals use RECLISA Child Assessment Forms to register the characteristics of the 30 children deemed to be "most vulnerable" in the school. During the evaluation fieldwork, it was noted that many of these children did not have school uniforms (or their school uniforms were visibly secondhand), and the interviews with the children indicated that the households of these beneficiary children often lacked food. Thus, the selection criteria seemed to be effective. As noted in Section 4.6.6, the COPE Clubs prevented dropout by giving children psychosocial support, alleviating stigma, and reducing the sense of being alone.

According to the evaluator, COPE Clubs are an example of best practice and USDOL should consider promoting the use of similar clubs in other countries. The problems identified during the evaluation (e.g., that some children had difficulty attending these sessions and staying alert, that some of the teachers and students did not speak the same language, and that schedules did not always cater to the needs of the children) were all of a practical nature that could be improved in this or future projects. Many projects combating child labor provide direct services, helping children with practical things such as stationery and school uniforms. While the importance of such practical help should not be ignored, the COPE Clubs are examples of best practice because they address the psychosocial problems of stigma and isolation of OVC in the positive setting of a club. The model is already successfully being implemented by RECLISA in Botswana.

5.4.2   The Resource Exchange Program

The principals were very positive toward the REP and said that it provided flexible funding for much-needed learning materials and equipment. One of the target schools, after having obtained a generator through the program, actually improved its quality rating (from one of the lowest-ranked schools in the district to one of the best). Interviewees emphasized that the rating improvement was largely the result of the REP. It should be noted that the schools were committed to exempt pupils

from payment of school fees for a period of two years. However, the schools have still not claimed fees for the first generation of learners (who are now in their third year).

The main problem with this system of reimbursement of school fees, according to the evaluator, is its lack of sustainability. After two years, the schools can begin claiming school fees again, and it is unlikely that the children are in a better position to pay. In all likelihood, they may actually be in a *worse* position, since their caregivers will be older, and the parents or caregivers affected by HIV/AIDS are unlikely to improve over the years. The evaluator thus finds it particularly encouraging that in the end phase of the project (June 2008), AIR/RECLISA provided additional funds for a second round of the program at each school, ensuring that the schools can maintain all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation.

The midterm evaluation noted that the REP should be used as a bridge program while waiting for the EDF to become operational. In this way, sustainability was built into the system; the children could be transferred to the EDF at the project's end. However, at the time of the final evaluation, the EDF was still *not* operational.

The midterm evaluation criticized the model of the REP for creating a parallel system to the government's OVC policy (i.e., the policy for OVC exemption of school fees). However, the lack of government funding and willingness to implement their own policy demonstrates that the REP corresponds to the needs of the country, and that it was not counterproductive to create a parallel system to the nonfunctioning EDF. It should be noted that USAID, through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, has adopted a similar formula to help OVC. During the fieldwork, the U.S. Embassy's OVC specialist in Windhoek indicated that the RECLISA model was "appropriate." The main problem with the model is its sustainability.

5.4.3   The Community Gardens

The community gardens were at first maintained by the COPE/Caregiver Clubs and sometimes by the beneficiary children.

Later, many of the gardens were transferred to the schools and used as part of agriculture training (now mandatory in Namibian schools). At the time of the final evaluation, several gardens had not yet been plowed and planted, and most of them did not yield much because of the draught and/or lack of fencing. A few of the gardens yielded a limited quantity of vegetables.

It is not expected that any of the gardens could at any point have yielded enough to guarantee the food security for the caregivers' households, or to ensure payment of the children's school fees. At best, it was a small addition to the OVC households' food consumption, or it could generate a small additional income to the households or to the school. Some of the garden initiatives also generated social benefits, such as improving caregivers' sense of community and strengthening their relationship with the school. For the gardens that were managed by the schools, it was noted that the school used the produce from the gardens to pay for stationery for OVC—or in some cases had distributed the produce to OVC.

VI   CONCLUSIONS

The project has reached its main quantitative and qualitative targets. The program design was based partly on previous Africare experiences in Zimbabwe (and partly on other Africare experiences) and implemented in Caprivi (a border zone to Zimbabwe with many similar problems as the country of origin of the design (in terms of poverty and HIV/AIDS incidence). The project has many strong assets, such as the COPE and COPE/Caregiver Clubs, the development of a Life Skills Manual, and the REP. It was previously suggested that the latter should be considered as a bridge program, since by law all OVC can be exempted from paying fees. However, the government EDF is not yet implemented, and thus it must be concluded that the REP was important; not as a bridge but rather as a standalone program.

RECLISA's program design was not sufficiently based on a participatory assessment involving the beneficiaries, such as OVC and caregivers. Therefore, the notion of "child labor" created widespread confusion (and is still a contested concept). Making more targeted use of participatory approaches to address this issue in the design phase could have made it possible to avoid some of the confusion.

Also, by involving core government institutions from the start, the project would have encountered less coordination problems and may have created better mechanisms for sustainability. The Child Welfare Subcommittees, for example, did not function properly, and it may have been advantageous to have a more solid institutional foundation for these committees from the start.

The project supported EI goals through the following actions: (1) Africare and COPE Clubs raised awareness of child labor in the communities, and the project personnel provided information about the issue in different forums and in mass media; (2) direct cost barriers to schooling were addressed through the REP and the school/community gardens, and psychological/stigma barriers were addressed through the COPE Clubs; (3) the project organized a national conference on child labor, and the project manager participated in different forums (including the PACC and the Regional OVC Forum) to address policy issues related to OVC and child labor; (4) the project fed examples of best-practices into the policy process, thus contributing to advancing knowledge through research; and (5) different initiatives sought to ensure the sustainability of the project.

Further, Africare participated in the regional and constituency OVC forums, and the organization also created a child labor forum in Caprivi. The engagement in these forums ensured ongoing contact with local government institutions, such as the Department of Labor and MOE. Whereas the project at first lacked coordination with local government institutions (e.g., the regional bureau of education), the coordination subsequently improved. Also, the national conference on child labor, co-organized with TECL, improved the harmonization of activities between actors.

Africare has a good team for implementing this project, and a staff that is appropriately assigned. Despite the rotation of staff at midterm, the new staff members acquired excellent working knowledge about the project and the implementation area in a very short time. The project, however, lacked a clear exit strategy.

Also, some of the project activities did not function well. The sustainability component was weak, though not surprising in view of the policy context in which the project was implemented. Also, the Child Welfare Subcommittees did not become a new community institution; instead, its functions were largely transferred to the constituency OVC forum. Some COPE Patrons also lacked training, especially since teacher reassignment is quite frequent in Namibia. Many teachers had little understanding of the plight of children, and some used corporal punishment during classes. Likewise, many stakeholders lacked a clear understanding of the relationship between the project and child labor. This is one of the reasons that the project had difficulties in tracking the working status of children. It should be noted that the aforementioned challenges are relatively minor (and should be expected in the Namibian policy milieu) and do not thwart the overall positive assessment of the project.

VII   RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS TO USDOL

- **Project conception.** The project was conceived by Africare without sufficiently involving local stakeholders (e.g., OVC, caregivers, and government staff). For new projects, it is recommended that USDOL require grant awardees to use participatory approaches in the conception phase to ensure that project proposals address local needs and take into account the local sociocultural understanding of child labor and child work.

- **Creation of new committees.** The project design made it necessary to create a new institution, the Child Welfare Subcommittee. It is recommended that USDOL investigate, in all committee-creating projects, whether an existing and functioning community committee can be used (e.g., PTA, school board, Children Protection Committee), instead of establishing a new committee. If it is deemed necessary to create a new institution, USDOL should consider whether sufficient funding and time are allocated to enable adequate training and follow-up of the new committee.

- **Exit strategy.** USDOL is funding a second phase of the TECL project, which seeks to implement the country action plan to combat WFCL. In this regard, to benefit from the gains of RECLISA, USDOL is strongly recommended to promote strong coordination between TECL-2 and Africare.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO AFRICARE

- **Coordination with other Africare projects.** Agricultural assistance to RECLISA-supported community gardens was withdrawn on the grounds that the community gardens should not receive support from two projects at the same time. While the evaluator understands and respects this decision, it is recommended that support from two projects should be made available when such support is cost-effective and can improve the results of the project activities.[17]

- **Exit strategy.** The exit strategy is still very thin. The sustainability and exit strategies of the project need to be further defined to ensure that project activities will continue beyond the scope of the project.

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[17] This recommendation was given at midterm and is reiterated here since the evaluator believes that new research in development confirms that multiple actions in one community have greater effect than spreading services too "thin" over several communities. If a particular effort (community gardens or any other activity, project, or program) is failing, it may be that it has not yet attained a sufficient level of interaction (or complexity) in order to reach a critical mass for change. In other words, development efforts are not necessarily interacting in a linear way, but may each interact in a non-additive fashion; some reinforcing, and some reducing the effect of the initial development agent. Hence, it is believed that if Africare multiplies efforts in one community, the impact would be much larger than the combined impact in two communities, each receiving only one support activity.

- **Reimbursement of school fees.** The end of the project may lead to the unfortunate dropout of a large number of project beneficiaries who cannot pay their school fees. It is recommended that Africare seek to integrate the former RECLISA beneficiaries into the USAID support program for OVC (through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan), or into other similar initiatives.[18]

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Policy efforts.** The creation of a new policy is not sufficient to make a change at the grassroots level; most policies in Namibia are not implemented. It is recommended that any policy-related activity is accompanied by an implementation plan (and a supporting implementation budget), and that policymaking activities are set up using participatory approaches. The implicit condition for a project proposing to make policy changes is that it needs to be of long duration (ideally six to eight years), and that it needs to allocate a substantial budget for implementation of the policy. Also, it needs to be accompanied by measures of structural change (that can guide the policymaking process) to avoid a top-down creation of the policy and corresponding lack of ownership and lack of implementation at the grassroots level.

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[18] As noted above, subsequent to the final evaluation (June 2008), AIR/RECLISA provided additional funds to Africare for a second round of the program at each school, ensuring maintenance of all RECLISA beneficiaries until graduation. This recommendation is therefore already being successfully implemented.

VIII   LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICES

DESIGN

The use of participatory approaches involving all future stakeholders in the design phase helps eliminate problems that might otherwise impede project implementation at a later stage.

A design building on and cooperating with existing institutions and committees simplifies implementation and increases the chances for sustainability.

IMPLEMENTATION

Relatively simple initiatives that address stigma and other barriers to education, such as the COPE Clubs, can be highly cost-effective. Similarly, the *Heroes Books* can be powerful tools for OVC and caregivers to deal with grief. These two initiatives, the COPE Clubs and the UNICEF/Philippi Trust-supported *Heroes Books* are, according to this evaluator, examples of best practices that could be duplicated elsewhere. However, when creating COPE Clubs, teachers and Patrons need extensive training to better understand OVC's plight and to change current practices related to disciplining children by using corporal punishment. Likewise, project-created committees need clear TOR and a large amount of capacity building to function well.

Community gardens address underlying poverty and food security barriers to education. However, they need a large amount of resources if they are to function adequately. Although it may seem 'unfair' to make one community benefit from two projects concurrently, such double support may prove cost-effective.

The coordination with TECL in the national conference on child labor (co-organized by RECLISA and TECL) is an example of best practice: It ensured better coordination between the projects, stronger impact (since it was implemented as part of an ongoing policy process rather than as a standalone event), and better sustainability (because it was integrated into a series of activities leading to a policy framework on WFCL). Likewise, project personnel need to build partnership and coordination structures during the design phase.

SUSTAINABILITY

The exit strategy should be created during the project conception phase. It is important to involve project stakeholders (e.g., government institutions, direct beneficiaries) in the design of such a strategy, and ensure that the exit strategy is implemented early enough to assure community takeover of the project.